

Effective communication strategies to engage struggling youngsters

Thank you to Lisa and the team for giving me an opportunity to share my thoughts on this subject.

Before I start let me say I have no formal qualification in this other than a Level 3 Diploma in Children & Young Peoples Workforce, 35 years working in Social Sector with Vulnerable clients such as people with Drug & Alcohol issues, ASBOs, Mental Health. 15 years fostering having cared for 35 children Two grown children of my own but most importantly 35 years Walking with the Lord

The strategies I will be stating here are ones that have stood me well both throughout my personal and working life.

To start with I need to say to be able to effectively communicate with your child you need to take these two things on-board "YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME" I know from experience that self-blame is something that is most likely to be a feeling you have. Secondly it's not the youngsters fault.

I say this because both of these attitudes will only hinder your communication. Understand that the Society that you now live in is the one to blame by its rebellion towards Gods word and rejection of biblical family principles.

So after setting out your own mind into a place that is free from both guilt and blame I think the next place to look is where best to be able to speak together.

I think it goes without saying that privacy is a must. I also think that it needs to be a place where both parties need to feel at ease. So for instance when I had to have deep discussions with my daughter I know that she enjoys the cinema and also going out for a meal, so I would arrange for this to happen so that the environment for a deep relaxing discussion was there, Whereas my Son I would set time aside to play computer games and talk about tech etc. So it could lead into the discussions around the subject we needed to speak about.

So you are the ones that know your child the best and know what venue would best suite both you and them to have deep discussions.

Next I would say is prepare yourself for the meeting and what it's about, unless you have a clear goal on the outcome that you are looking for then you are likely to be dragged off onto other subjects by either the youngster or yourself and end up with nothing but upset. I know from experience that this is likely to be the case where time runs out because the subject expands into a everyone and everything and all you have done is left a load of unanswered questions and feelings of rejection and

failure. Try to keep the subject manageable so that you can get as much as you can of the goal you set. And hopefully it will lead into further discussions because it was enjoyable to both parties.

Within the meeting one thing to remember is most likely the youngster is probably feeling vulnerable, For as much as they put on a hard front they are still young they are facing the person who brought them up they are coming against their parents advice. They are most likely the ones who were asked to meet you to discuss an issue that they are happy with or at least have taken. So remember Bravado is a coping measure for youth and may not just be cheekiness. So I would say do not fall into the trap of defending against these sorts of attitudes but keep to your goal.

I often hear from parents “ I am my child’s best friend” Can I say this is so not right you are not called to be your child’s best friend your calling is so much higher you are your child’s Mother/Father their protector even against themselves, their provider, their comforter I could go on and on. You are called to be there for them throughout your life. I for one never had a best friend that fit the title Parent. So can I say In Life try where ever possible to support them where you can, except where it will lead to harm either physical or spiritual to them or others. And where this is the case then be firm but loving in telling them that you disagree but you still love them.

Keep the discussion age appropriate

For instance we had a young boy come to us that was very effeminate in his behaviour, He used to run around and wave his hands and say he was a butterfly. It came to our attention that at school and at contact he was saying he wanted to be a girl. Now remember he was under social services so we were concerned where this could lead. I sought the Lord on this and He said “I don’t make mistakes; he is who I made him”

So I asked the boy why he wanted to be a girl and he said because I like pretty dresses and playing with pretty things. I asked what he liked about them and he said the bright colours. I affirmed to him that it was alright to like Colourful things and also be a boy. We took him shopping and bought him bright coloured boy’s clothes, Marvel dressing up costumes arts and crafts to make and paint.

So now its 4 years later and we are still in contact with him and his family and he makes no declaration that he wants to be a girl’

We could have said to him Boys don't act that way and you're a boy. But this would have meant him making a choice between what's inside and the outside? And the sad fact is he would have most likely been supported in rejecting the outward in today's world.

But for older children it needs to be different

For instance when my daughter of 23 came to me and my wife and told us that she was a Lesbian, my reply was that I am her dad and loved her more now than the day I first cradled her in my arms but because I loved her I could not condone the decision she had taken and consequences would occur, We would not accept any woman that she took up with because we believe that any relationship of this kind was an abusive relationship where both are abusing one another and both are self-abusing. I would not attend any wedding because we would not insult God by such an act so I would most definitely not be giving her away. I explained to her that she was well aware of our relationship with Jesus and she was the one who had made the decision to move away from what she had been brought up believing, however we would always be there for her and we would always pray for the best for her. Now did this upset her? Well YES but did this close the door on future relationships and further discussions? No.

I would say that this should always be one of the aims of any discussion that it should never close the door to further ones, Remember time can work the miracle that you are looking for, stand firm in your conviction, keep praying and never close the door on reconciliation.

Now the most important thing to remember is this. "Prayer" this should always proceed any meeting asking for Gods guidance on what to discuss and asking for the Spirit to work on all the people who will be involved, Prayer after any meeting to water the seeds of any advice that was given and also to bring reconciliation to all under Gods holy word.

Where mistakes have happened in any meeting remember your one of your aims is to stop the World from alienating your child from you and the support you offer under your walk with God. So move on from any mistake and focus on the future and what you can do to reach them with the truth and use the lessons learned to make the next meeting better.

Thank you for giving me this short time to hopefully give you something to think on and use to bring about Gods wish for you and your Family to live in harmony under Him.